R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 012 287 UD 003 518

SIMON SAYS--A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD GAME.

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PUB DATE 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.80 20P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CHILDRENS GAMES, *INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY, RESPONSE MODE, *VERBAL COMMUNICATION, VISUAL LEARNING, INSTRUCTION, CURRICULUM, PROMPTING, PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION, FEEDBACK, SEQUENTIAL LEARNING, STUDENT MOTIVATION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES, REINFORCEMENT, TEACHERS, CHILDREN, INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATION, SIMON SAYS GAME

AN OLD CHILDREN'S GAME CAN BE USED AS A DEVICE TO TEACH YOUNGSTERS TO FOLLOW INCREASINGLY COMPLEX INSTRUCTIONS. ITS USE WILL INCREASE THE CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO RESPOND SELECTIVELY, PARTICULARLY TO VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS, BY REPLACING THE TYPICAL VISUAL DOMINANCE OF THE CHILD WITH A VERBAL ONE. THE CURRICULUM IS DESIGNED TO MOVE FROM THE SIMPLEST TEACHING LEVEL TO A MORE COMPLEX ONE BY GRADUALLY INTRODUCING MORE AND MORE IRRELEVANT CUES. THE RESPONSE DEPENDS UPON INCREASINGLY MORE SPECIFIC VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS BY THE TEACHER, AND THE INITIAL VISUAL AND VERBAL CUES ARE LATER REPLACED BY VERBAL CUES ONLY. THIS APPLICATION OF THE GAME ENCOMPASSES THE PROGRAMED INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES OF INDIVIDUALIZED RESPONSE, FEEDBACK, AND SEQUENTIAL DEVELOPMENT. MOTIVATION IS STIMULATED BY THE MOTOR ACTIVITY AND THE SURPRISE ELEMENTS IN THE GAME. THE TECHNIQUE IS FLEXIBLE BECAUSE OF ITS PACING AND THE VARIATIONS WHICH ARE POSSIBLE. IT IS ALSO PRACTICAL, INVOLVES NO COST AND LITTLE PREPARATION, AND IS EASY TO MANAGE. (NH)

ED012287

E210
.M47

Letter sent 33
July 30, 67

SIMON SAYS: A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD GAME

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UD 003 518

UD003518

SIMON SAYS: A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD GAME[1]

Most children, whether advantaged or disadvantaged, have had some experience with the game, SIMON SAYS. As usually played, SIMON SAYS is a competitive game which tests children's ability to follow oral instructions. In this paper we will take a systematic view of the game as a medium to teach children to follow instructions under increasingly complex conditions.

The primary purpose of the set of sequenced games outlined in this paper is to improve children's ability to pay attention selectively. By paying attention selectively, we refer to children responding to some instructions and not others, and learning to ignore irrelevant or misleading instructions. The term "instructions" is loosely meant to include both verbal and non-verbal instructions, with non-verbal instructions consisting of a visual example, given by the teacher for the children to copy. This curriculum has as its objective the teaching of children to respond selectively to instructions, and, specifically, teaching the children to respond to verbal instructions, even when the non-verbal visual instructions (an example given by the teacher) are contrary to the verbal instructions.

RATIONALE

Teaching the children to respond to verbal rather than to

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[1] The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Fairfid Caudle and Vivian Saggese in the development of this manuscript.

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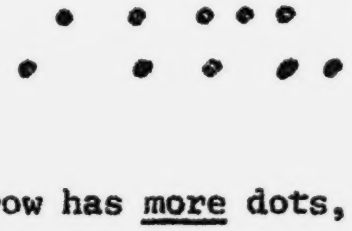
visual cues is important, because for young children, visual cues are generally dominant. That is, when given a problem which can be responded to either on a visual basis or on a non-visual (either verbal, conceptual, or otherwise) basis, the visual basis will tend to determine the response. The issue of visual dominance is central to much of the research in cognitive development conducted by Piaget and others (Piaget, 1952; Beilin, 1964; Zimiles, 1966). Illustrative of their concern is the following type of problem:

When a young child is shown two rows of five dots such as:



and is asked which row has more dots, the child will not recognize that both rows have the same number of dots. Instead, he will say that the lower row has more dots. The reason for this is, of course, that the child is responding to the visual cue of the distribution of the dots, rather than counting the dots in both lines in order to answer the question. Similarly, when SIMON SAYS is usually played, and the teacher gives the verbal instruction of, "SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your hips," while giving an inconsistent visual example (putting her hands on her head), the children will tend to follow the visual example rather than the verbal instruction.

In both examples, namely the problem of the dots and the

problem of following the oral direction rather than what the teacher does, the child must learn to ignore the visual cues (the longer length of one line and the teacher's visual example) and respond to another cue (the actual number of dots in the lines and the verbal instructions of the teacher)

THE CURRICULUM

Obviously, the SIMON SAYS task is too difficult to begin with, and must be simplified and played first on a number of simpler levels. The basic plan which has been followed in designating these levels has been to gradually introduce more and more irrelevant cues, and to make the child's response dependent on a more and more specific verbal instruction from the teacher. The first levels of the game teach the behavior fo following verbal instructions. In the first level, each instruction is preceded by the notion of SIMON SAYS and is accompanied by an appropriate visual cue. This will accustom the children to respond to the verbal instruction indicated by SIMON SAYS. Gradually the teacher will drop the appropriate visual cues and introduce conflicting visual cues. Later levels teach the child to respond to verbal instructions only when SIMON SAYS, rather than to all verbal instructions given. Finally, the child must discriminate selectively by responding only to verbal instructions when SIMON SAYS, and ignore the false visual cues.

A behavioral outline of the suggested levels of the SIMON SAYS Curriculum are outlined in Chart 1. A general description of several of the levels is provided.

1. Telling and Showing: The teacher introduces the notion of

SIMON SAYS, explaining that they are going to play a game in which SIMON is leader and they are to follow what SIMON says to do. The first step of the game is for the child to follow the teacher's verbal instructions, while at the same time being given a visual example of what to do by the teacher. Thus the child gets two cues as to what he should do..

Teacher says	Teacher does	Children do
"SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your hips."	same	same

In the beginning, an important part of the game will be to give the children feedback as to whether they carry out the instructions correctly or not. This might be done in several ways. At first, the teacher might say, "Does everyone have their hands on their hips? Johnny's hands are on his hips, and so are mine." This usually suffices. When all the children have followed the instruction, then the next instruction is given. At this stage the children will not make too many errors, since they have both the verbal instructions as well as the visual example to follow.

2. Telling only: This second step is made a little more difficult by withdrawing the visual cue. The teacher gives verbal instructions, but does not follow them herself. Thus, for the first time in the game the children must rely on listening only.

Teachers says	Teacher does	Children do
"SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your hips."	nothing	Put their hands on their hips

The importance of listening carefully can also be drawn to the children's attention by having them first close their eyes, and then to follow the verbal instructions. This serves two purposes: as stated, it emphasizes the listening aspects of the game, and it also provides the teacher with information about whether the children are really responding to the verbal cue. It should be remembered that, even though the teacher herself does not provide a visual example, it is quite possible and probable that a child may look to see what his neighbor is doing and may copy the other children's actions rather than listening to the instructions. Another possible benefit of this step is giving the children practice in coordinating body movements without the help of visual ones.

3. Telling and Mis-showing: So far, the child has had an opportunity to learn to listen to, and follow, instructions. However, at this level, the child is first given practice in following the verbal instructions and in ignoring the visual example given by the teacher. The procedures for playing the game at this level are as follows: First, as usual, the teacher instructs the children that they are going to play the game differently, and that she is going to make the game "more fun" or "harder". The teacher tells the children very emphatically to do what she says. After several instructions in which the

teacher does what she says, she then proceeds to give a verbal instruction and to perform a different and non-corresponding action.

Teacher says	Teacher does	Children do
"SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your hips."	Puts her hands on her nose, for example.	Put their hands on their hips

When the children make mistakes, merely repeat that the idea of the game is to "do what I say." After each "trick" the teacher returns to a few instructions in which she says and does what she says.

4. SIMON SAYS: Telling and Not Showing: This is the first level at which instructions omitting SIMON SAYS are introduced. Previously the children were able to carry out the desired action by exactly following the verbal instructions, regardless of the visual example given by the teacher. Now, a further complication is introduced: The children must learn to follow some verbal instructions and not others. The cue which indicates to the child whether he is to follow the verbal instructions or not is dependent on these instructions including the words, SIMON SAYS. Prior to beginning this level the teacher must carefully tell the children that while SIMON is still leading the game, they must do what they are told only when SIMON SAYS to do so. When SIMON SAYS is

omitted, they must do nothing. At this level, there is no visual mis-cuing. The teacher gives verbal instructions with or without SIMON SAYS. Always, it is important to give feedback when the children are incorrect. Should the children carry out the verbal instructions without SIMON SAYS, the teacher may call attention to this by saying, "Listen again... Put your hands on your head...that's good, Barry is taking his hands off his head because SIMON didn't SAY."

Since this is a fairly difficult level, it may be necessary to simplify the game further. One way is by timing the words SIMON SAYS. For example, at the beginning of this level, the teacher should pause after saying SIMON SAYS to give the children a chance to prepare themselves for the instructions to follow. Later, the pace can be speeded up and these pauses can be eliminated.

Teacher says	Teacher does	Children do
"SIMON SAYS (pause) put your hands on your hips."	same	put hands on hips
"Put your hands on your head."	nothing	nothing

5. Doing what SIMON SAYS when SIMON SAYS to do it: At this level the child must pay attention even more carefully.

Remember, in the previous level, the child was only given verbal instructions; the teacher did nothing, except to give the instructions. In this level, however, the teacher carries out all the actions, but the children must learn to carry them out only when SIMON SAYS. So, now the children must pay attention to the verbal instructions and respond to some of them and not others, and at the same time, the child must ignore the visual example given by the teacher, who follows all the instructions, regardless of whether SIMON SAYS or not. As before, the teacher instructs the children to follow the instructions only when SIMON SAYS.

Teacher says	Teacher does	Children do
"SIMON SAYS put your hands on your hips."	same	same
"Put your hands on your head."	same	nothing

6. Doing what SIMON SAYS, when he says it, and not what teacher does: This level of the game is by far the most complicated since the child must do the following:

(a) Respond only to those verbal instructions which include SIMON SAYS

(b) Respond correctly to those verbal instructions, even when the teacher performs an incorrect action. The teacher's actions may or may not correspond to the instructions.

Teachers says	Teacher does	Children do
"Put your hands on your hips."	same	nothing
"Put your hands on your head."	Puts hands on shoulders	nothing
"SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your knees."	Puts hands on head	Put hands on knees

As before, the pace can begin somewhat slowly, with pauses after
after SIMON SAYS to allow the children to prepare themselves. These can be shortened. It must be remembered to give feedback when errors are made. This can take the form of a yes or no question: "Did SIMON SAY....?", an alternate choice question: "Did SIMON SAY..... or .....?" Or the teacher might ask a child who responded correctly to repeat the instructions.

Discussion

The game will be discussed in relation to:

(1) the discipline of programmed instruction;

(2) its motivational aspects;

(3) its flexibility;

(4) its practicality.

(1) The discipline of programed instruction

Intrinsic to the format of SIMON SAYS are three of the

most important principles of programed instruction: individualized response; small steps; feedback.[2]

Although the game is played in a group and is group paced, each player is required to make an active response. These responses occur with great frequency. That is, the amount of information between actions by the children is very small. Since what each child does is immediately observable by the supervising adult, it is easy to provide the children with corrective feedback as well as positive reinforcement.

Furthermore, the games lend themselves to implementing other variables which are important to programers. Clearly defined instructional objectives are presented in Chart I.[3] This chart also demonstrates the way that the game has been sequenced from the simple to the complex. In the beginning, the child learns simple responses to verbal instructions with corresponding visual cues. After sufficient practice, the difficulty of the game is incremented, each complication involving one new step at a time. After several

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[2] A more extended discussion of the application of programed instruction procedures to the development of a classroom curriculum, is provided in "A Calendar Curriculum for Disadvantaged Children" (Gotkin, 1967).

[3] Pages 15 and 16.

small steps of increased difficulty, the sequence has led the children to difficult discriminations of responding only to the appropriate cues and ignoring the false cues.

(2) Motivational aspects

That children enjoy playing SIMON SAYS is hardly surprising. The game never would have survived so well as a part of our culture if children didn't enjoy it. The primary sources of its motivation seem to be the active motor involvement and the sense of surprise. Movement for 4 and 5-year-olds has always been recognized by early childhood educators as important. SIMON SAYS contains an opportunity for great varieties of different orders of movement. In regard to the sense of surprise, this seems fulfilled in two different ways. First, the incongruity of the visual and verbal brings about a great sense of fun, especially as the children begin to catch themselves in the middle of being misled. Second, the children get a big kick out of commands such as: "Touch your hands with your toes!" "Raise your left foot off the ground.... now, raise your right foot off the ground!"

(3) Flexibility

The flexibility of SIMON SAYS is manifested both in the possibility of pacing the speed at which directions are given, as well as through introducing variations to the game. Giving the directions at a slower pace helps eliminate the confusion of the

slower learners. Later, speeding up the directions lends greater challenge and excitement to the game.

In addition, the game lends itself to several variations. The different types of actions the children may perform are manifold, i.e., "turn around," "clap hands," "stamp your feet." The game may be complicated by giving two corresponding verbal and visual instructions at once, e.g., "Put one hand on your head and one hand on your waist," or, "Stamp your foot and touch your nose." Also, multiple directions may be given in sequence, e.g., "Put your hands on your knees and then on your shoulders." Numbered games may be played, for example, "Put up three fingers," or "Touch your knee three times." And for the children who are VERY successful at the game, the roles of teacher and child may be switched, giving the child a chance to be the teacher.

One value of the overt responses of the game is that it is possible to observe some new and interesting phenomena in the general response tendencies of the children. For example, 5-year-olds characteristically will put both hands in the positions directed when the teacher says, "SIMON SAYS, put your hands on your shoulders; SIMON SAYS, put your hands on your hips; SIMON SAYS, put your hands on your knees." However, when they are told, "SIMON SAYS, put your hands on your nose;

on your throat; or, chin," many put only one hand in the position directed. It would seem that most of the children are responding not to the number of hands that they should use, but to what they are to touch. Therefore, they use two hands because they have two shoulders, but one hand because they have only one nose. To correct this tendency, the teacher might say, "SIMON SAYS, put your hands on one shoulder." This would add variety to the game, as well as teach the children to respond to all parts of the instructions.

(4) Practicality

SIMON SAYS is practical in that it involves no cost, requires little preparation and is easy to manage. More important than these notions of practicality are the uses of the game as a diagnostic tool to assess a wide range of problems - from physical coordination, to following directions, to identifying children who tend to copy rather than listen and act on their own, and to identifying those children who have difficulties with shifts in directions. The game provides for on the spot assessment, and so often teachers of young children do not have such tools available. Most of the instruments used to assess the abilities of young children need be administered by trained testers, require interpretation by a specialist and application of the results to curriculum is

questionable. In SIMON SAYS, what students can and cannot do is readily observable by the teacher and is easily related to sequences of competencies involved in levels of the game. Also, the teacher is able to observe differences in the way the children respond to "remedial" instruction so that what is being assessed is not only what the child can do, but what kind of a learner he is when faced with transitional skills.

Not only is SIMON SAYS practical for the above reasons, but it is an ideal indoor game for rainy days.

CHART I

SIMON SAYS - Game Description and Objectives

(The pacing of instructions and responses may be varied at all levels; as the children become more adept the game may be speeded up. Also, when a child becomes particularly adept at the game, he may assume the role of teacher.)

Description of Game Level	Objectives	Teacher's Statements and Actions	Children's Actions
1. The notion of SIMON SAYS is introduced. Corresponding verbal and visual instructions.	1. To provide opportunity for motor activity. 2. To follow verbal directions with motor movements. 3. To recognize previously learned names of parts of the body: (a) leg; (b) arm; (c) ankle; (d) waist. 4. To learn unfamiliar names of parts of the body: (a) thigh; (b) elbow; (c) spine; (d) eyebrow.	Gives verbal instruction. Gives corresponding visual instruction, e.g. "SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your hips." Teacher does same.	Follow all verbal and visual instructions; e.g. Put hands on hips.
2. Verbal instructions only	1. To follow directions without a visual cue. 2. To coordinate body movements; e.g., to put hands on elbows with eyes closed.	Gives verbal instructions only; e.g., "Put your hands on your hips." Gives no visual cues.	Follow only the verbal instructions; e.g., Put hands on hips.
3. Verbal instructions and simultaneous false visual cues.	To follow verbal directions in the presence of false visual cues. (This is difficult since the visual cues are dominant)	Gives verbal instruction accompanied by a different visual instruction; e.g., "Put your hands on your hips." Teacher puts hands on nose.	Follow verbal instruction. Ignore visual cues; e.g., Put hands on hips.

Description of Game Level	Objectives	Teacher's Statements and Actions	Children's Actions
4. Instructions omitting SIMON SAYS are introjected.	To follow verbal instructions selectively. The child should respond only to the verbal instructions preceded by SIMON SAYS and should not respond when SIMON SAYS is omitted from the verbal instructions.	Gives verbal instructions alternating with or without SIMON SAYS; e.g., (1)"SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your hips." Teacher does nothing. (2) "Put your hands on your head." Teacher does nothing.	Follow only verbal
5. Verbal instructions with SIMON SAYS continues alternately with instructions omitting SIMON SAYS, and with corresponding visual cues to all instructions.	To follow verbal and visual instructions selectively. The child should NOT respond when SIMON SAYS is omitted, although the teachers presents the visual cues.	Gives verbal instructions with and without SIMON SAYS. Demonstrates all instructions visually; e.g. (1) SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your hips." Teacher does same. (2) "Put your hands on your head." Teacher does same.	Follow only the instructions preceded by SIMON SAYS, not following the misleading teacher's visual cues; e.g. (1) Children put hands on hips. (2) Children do nothing.
6. The above game of SIMON SAYS continues with the additional presentation of false visual cues.	To follow verbal instructions selectively in the presence of false visual cues.	Gives verbal instructions alternating with or without SIMON SAYS. Presents false visual cues; e.g. (1) "Put your hands on your hips." Teacher puts hands on hips. (2) "Put your hands on your shoulders." Teacher puts hands on shoulders. (3) SIMON SAYS, Put your hands on your knees." Teacher puts hands on head.	Follow only verbal instructions preceded by SIMON SAYS. Ignore visual cues; e.g. (1) Children do nothing; (2) Children do nothing; (3) Children put hands on knees.

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